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[Franciscan Miscellany], including *I Fioretti* [Little Flowers of Saint Francis]; *Leggenda di S. Chiara vergine* [Italian prose translation of Thomas of Celano, *Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis*]; Second Rule of Saint Francis; Testament of Saint Francis
In Italian, illuminated manuscript on paper
Northern Italy, Venice or Ferrara?, c. 1460-1480

166 ff., preceded and followed by a paper flyleaf, some text missing on first folio due to tear in upper right-hand corner, paper restoration with missing words supplied by a later hand, missing a few leaves (collation: i⁵ [of 8, missing 2 first leaves of quire, likely blank, missing a leaf between ff. 5-6], ii⁹ [of 10, missing last leaf of quire between ff. 13-14], iii-vi¹⁰, vii-ix⁸, x¹³ [of 14, missing xi of quire, likely cancelled], xi⁸, xii¹⁰, xiii⁹ [missing last folio of quire, between ff. 118-119], xiv-xvii¹⁰, xviii⁴, xix⁶), on paper (with various watermarks including: (1) Eagle displayed in a circle: of the type Briquet 201, Venice, 1476; Briquet 202, Venice, 1475; (2) Griffon: close to Briquet 7465, Venice and Ferrara, 1471-1476 and Venice, 1472; (3) Letter "R" in a circle (f. 161), not in Briquet, nor Piccard; (4) Three mounts and a Cross (f. 162): quite a common watermark in Italy), written in a rounded humanistic hand in brown ink on up to 29 long lines, ruled in plummet (justification 132 x 95 mm.), chapter numbers in Roman numerals copied in red in the margins, vertical and horizontal catchwords, rubrics in red, paragraph marks in red or blue, numerous 3- to 5- line high initials in red or blue, with either purple or red calligraphic penwork, some extending in the margins, opening 6-line high historiated initial presenting Saint Francis showing his stigmata, initial painted in pink on a burnished gold ground with swirling acanthus leaves in blue, green and red, and hairline stems with burnished gold besants and floral motifs extending in the margin, circular laurel wreath in blue and dark pink with fluttering colored ribbons in lower margin of first folio designed to receive painted arms or monogram, here filled instead with a 6-pointed star of David traced in black ink and surrounded by 6 points (star evidently added later). Bound in later limp vellum, smooth spine (Some modern paper restorations to the following leaves, with possible loss of text, some words supplied by a modern hand in upper right-hand corner of f. 1, water-stain throughout in upper part of leaves, although luckily not hindering legibility, with ink only a bit faded in certain cases). Dimensions 200 x 145 mm.

The core of this Franciscan compilation is a version of the Little Flowers, a widely varied collection of stories and legends concerning Saint Francis, his companions, and his disciples, originally based in oral accounts and translated from Latin into Tuscan dialect by the mid-fourteenth century. A number of the chapters in the present compilation are not included in critical editions and bear witness to the vitality and enthusiasm with which the memory of the life and teaching of Saint Francis was preserved and continuously enriched. Included also is the Italian prose translation of the Life of Saint Clare, which still awaits its modern critical edition.

PROVENANCE

Script, decoration and watermarks certainly secure an Italian origin for this manuscript, likely copied and illuminated in the Veneto with the different watermarks pointing to that region. The suggested date of this manuscript is also inferred from the style of its historiated opening initial and calligraphic penwork initials, which compare to Veneto-Ferrarese illuminated manuscript production of the third quarter of the fifteenth century.

Private Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-45, *I Fioretti di San Francesco* [Little Flowers of Saint Francis], Part I, incipit, "Prima mete [sic, è da] considerare che lo glorioso messer santo Francesco in tucti l'acti dela sua vita..." [chap. 1 in ed. Cambell, 1988, pp. 111-113; *Dei dodici primi compagni di santo Francesco*; chap. 1 in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 5-6]; paragraph mark in red: "El primo compagno de san Francesco fo frate Bernardo d'Assisi..." [chap. 2 and 3 in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 6-12]; first rubric (f. 5v), *Come san Francesco ando ad san Jacomo de Galitia. iii.* [marked in the margin as chap. 3; chap. 4 in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 13-17]; following rubric (f. 6), *Come frate Bernardo prese lo loco deli frate a Bologna* [marked in the margin as chap. 4; chap. 5 in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 17-19]; last rubric, *Della humilita de frate Masseo* [marked in the margin as chap. 28; chap. 32 in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp.936-937]; explicit, "[...] bene non bisognava demitare verso"; rubric (f. 45), *Qui finisce la prima parte deli fiorecti del libro de sancto Francesco. Deo gratias. Amen;*

ff. 45v-46v, *I Fioretti di San Francesco* [Little Flowers of Saint Francis], Part I (continued), rubric, *Come uno novitio rimase nell'ordine per la infrascripta visione*; incipit, "Uno giovane molto nobile et delicato..." [marked in the margin as chap. 29; but numbered chap. 20 in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 53-55; chap. 20 in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 908-909];

ff. 46v-75v, *Le considerazioni sulle Stimate* [Considerations on the Holy Stigmata] and other related legends, rubric, *Delle gloriose stimate del beato messere sancto Francesco* (ff. 46v-47); following rubric, *Come sancto Francesco pervenne al monte de la Verna* (ff. 47-51); last rubric, *Como papa Gregorio, papa Nicolo et papa Alisandro confermato le sacre stimate con privilegii* (ff. 75-75v) [some chapters in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 142-190, although the present manuscript contains more than the simple five Considerations, with additional chapters (or extrapolations), not included in published editions];

ff. 75v-88v, *I Fioretti di San Francesco* [Little Flowers of Saint Francis], chapters from Part I and II, rubric, *Come fo revelato a santo Francesco che frate Elya doveva apostare et morire fuore dell'ordine*; incipit, "Dimorando una fiata santo Francesco et frate Elya in uno convento..." [marked in the margin as chap. 41; but chap. 38 in ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 96-98; also chap. 38 in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 945-947]; following rubric (f. 77), *Come frate Lodovico re de Francia visito frate Egidio al monte de Perusia* [marked in the margin as chap. 42; chap. 34 in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 939-940]; last rubric, *De alquanti devoti et santi frati de la Marcha*; incipit, "La provincia dela Marca d'Ancona fo anticamente a modo chel cielo stellato..."; explicit, "[...] santo Michele se parti lassando molto consolato. Deo gratias" [Part II, chap. 42 in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 953-954];

ff. 88v-98v, *La vita di frate Ginepro* [Life of Brother Juniper], rubric, *Qui comenza la vita de frate Ginepro compagno de santo F[rancesco] buono de profunda humilita*; last rubric, *Della morte del compagno de frate Gineprio* (ff. 98-98v) [see critical study and edition by G. Petrocchi, 1960; see also ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 247-267];

The Life of Brother Juniper is here supplied in an anonymous Italian translation from the end of the fourteenth century of the original Latin *Vita fratris Juniperi* (itself dating from the thirteenth century).

f. 98v-99, *I Fioretti di San Francesco* [Little Flowers of Saint Francis], chapter from Part I, rubric, *De frate Simone d'Asesi et delle caritative et gloriose opera*; incipit, "Intorno al principio de l'ordine vivendo santo Francesco venne alla religione uno giovene de Asesi chiamato frate Simone..." [marked in the margin as chap. 59; chap. 41 in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 950-952; see also ed. Bonino, 1998, pp. 103-105];

ff. 99-120v, *Leggenda di S. Chiara vergine*, Italian prose translation of Thomas of Celano, *Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis* [Life of Saint Clare of Assisi], rubric, *Qui comenza la legenda de la devota sposa vergine sposa de Cristo santa Chiara et della sua sorella carnale beata Agnese. Et prima dela loro, schiacta et nascimento*; incipit, "La mirabile donna santa Chiara de vertu chiarissima..."; explicit, "[...] una bellissima et honorevile chiesa nela quale fo poi translato quello corpo et glorioso. A di doi del mese de octobre. A laude de Iesu Cristo. Amen";

This is an Italian prose translation of the *Legenda sanctae Clarae*, attributed to Thomas of Celano. The Latin *Legenda sanctae Clarae* was published in 1910 by F. Pennachi, based on the manuscript in Assisi, Bibl. Communale, MS 338. The Latin prose *Legenda* was translated by F. Casolini, 1953. We have consulted the translation found in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 1211-1264, which begins much like the present text, but quickly differs. To this date there is no census of the different prose translations of the *Leggenda di S. Chiara*, nor is there a proper critical edition based on the known manuscripts.

ff. 120v-159v, *I Fioretti di Santo Francesco d'Ascesi* [Little Flowers of Saint Francis], [Additional Chapters, Part III]; rubric, *Come santo Francesco libero uno frate dal demonio*; last rubric (f. 159), *De uno miraculo de una rondina che se puse nella mano uno baractiere che non credeva nella indulgentia. cxviii*. [here identified in the margin as chap. 119]. Some of these additional legends are accounted for in critical editions, although the majority seems to be later additions that have not yet been properly identified or edited;

The core of this manuscript (ff. 1-88v, ff. 98v-99 and ff. 120v-159v) contains the work known as the *Fioretti di Santo Francesco d'Ascesi* or the Little Flowers of Saint Francis. This is one of the best known of all Franciscan sources, many of which, like this one, have their basis in the oral tradition. Not a formal biography as such of Saint Francis (c. 1182-1226), the *Fioretti* is composed of a large collection—a "garden of flowers" or florilegia--of Franciscan stories and legends, some directly concerned with Francis himself and some concerned with the second or even third generation of his disciples and followers.

The Little Flowers are actually an Italian adaptation of the oral accounts recorded in the Latin *Actus Beati Francisci et sociorum ejus* (The Deeds of Brother Francis and His Companions), written c. 1328-37:

"Brother James of Massa received this account from the mouth of Brother Leo and Brother Ugolino of Monte Santa Maria had it from the mouth James, and I the writer had it from the mouth of Brother Ugolino." The *Actus Beati Francisci* is now attributed to Ugolino da Montegiorgio, and the translation of it contained in the Little Flowers is due to an anonymous Tuscan Franciscan, writing after c. 1337 and probably closer to the second half of the fourteenth century. The Little Flowers was also based on other sources, such as the different accounts composed respectively by Thomas of Celano and Bonaventura.

The *Fioretti* are commonly divided into three distinct parts. The first part comprises some 41 chapters on the deeds of Saint Francis and his first companions, including Bernard, Rufino, Leo, Maseo, Clare, Anthony, and Conrad. The writer and compiler of the first part of the *Fioretti* was a member of the Spiritual party, as he emphasizes the poverty and austerity of the early days. A second part contains 12 chapters of stories on certain friars from the Province of the Marches, including Conrad of Offida and John of La Verne. This second part provides tales of a group of friars living in the Marches in the latter years of the thirteenth century. In these chapters there are no stories about Saint Francis and no reference to Franciscan literature: the tone of this second part is far more mystical and supernatural. Traditionally the second part of the *Fioretti* also includes the Considerations on the Holy Stigmata. The 53 chapters of the first and second parts, taken together, form the nucleus of the Little Flowers. Finally a third part consists of a selection of additional chapters, many of which are copied in the present manuscript. Not consistently included either singly or as a group in critical editions, because they are not always considered "canonical," these chapters are often the result of successive additions to the compilation throughout the fifteenth century.

The main philological interest of the present manuscript lies precisely in these supplementary chapters, often not recorded or edited. The present collection of *Fioretti* contains some 119 chapters, numbered in Roman numerals in the margin. This count is somewhat tricky in that the continuous numbering includes chapters of the *Leggenda di S. Chiara* (numbered 60 to 70)—although this work is clearly a separate work altogether, chapters part of the work usually referred to as the Considerations on the Holy Stigmata (numbered 30 to 39), as well as chapters pertaining to the Life of Brother Juniper (numbered 46 to 58). No known manuscript evidently includes all the chapters of the Little Flowers along with the ancillary chapters and works that often accompany the core text. Quite possibly no such "complete" manuscript ever existed: rather, selections were made from common stock. A complete census has not yet been realized, although a first census of manuscripts housed mostly in Italian collections was conducted by G. Petrocchi, who lists some 84 codices (see Petrocchi, 1957, pp. 311-325), and a second census by G. Pagnani increased the number of manuscripts to 90 (see Pagnani, 1959, pp. 24-25). The work was enormously popular in the incunabular period and was printed already seventeen times in Italy in the fifteenth century, the first edition in Vicenza in 1476 (see B. Brogliato, "La prima edizione a stampa dei *Fioretti* di S. Francesco, Vicenza, 1476," *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 72 [1979], pp. 500-505; and Cambell, 1988, p. 12).

Such a popular text has been edited a number of times, including by P. Sabatier, 1902; B. Bughetti (1926) reproduced in *Fonti francescane*, 1998, pp. 863-1026; J. Cambell, 1988 (offering a parallel edition of the Latin *Actus* and the vernacular *Fioretti*); G. Petrocchi, 1972, reproduced in Bonino,

1998. Several English translations are available, that of M.A. Habig, 1991, pp. 1269-1530, as well as others sited in Online Resources below.

The study of the Little Flowers and its manuscript tradition has been based primarily on manuscripts in Italian collections (cf. remarks by S. Clasen, 1962, p. 216) and would greatly benefit from a more wide-ranging and accurate census of extant codices abroad and in private hands. Only two copies are recorded in North American collections in De Ricci's *Census* and its *Supplement*, one in the Scheide Collection (Princeton) and another in the Boston Public Library (II, p. 2129, and Faye and Bond, *Supplement*, p. 213). Surprisingly few examples occur in the Schoenberg Database and none at all among recent transactions. However, a systematic and complete census of extant manuscripts, including the later compilations from the fifteenth century, might allow for a better appreciation of the continued "flowering" and expansion of the Little Flowers, each text responding to special temporal and local needs.

ff. 159v-164, Rule of Saint Francis, in Italian [Regola Bollata, 1223: "Approved" Second Rule, 1223], rubric, *Qui comença la regola delli frati de sancto Francisco. De Honorio vescovo servo delli serve de dio. Primo*; incipit, "Honorio vescovo servo delli serve de dio..."; explicit, "[...] Data nel laterano nel terço calende de dicembre del nostro pontificato l'anno octavo";

It was customary for the friars in convents to read both the Rule and the Testament (follows below, ff. 164-166) on Fridays. This is an Italian translation of the definitive rule or Second Rule approved by Pope Honorius III. The original of the Second Rule is found in the Papal Bull *Solet annuere* of Honorius III (29 November 1223). For this reason it is often referred to as the "Regola bollata." The Rule was published a number of times, including in its Italian translation in *Fonti Francescane. Editio minor...*, Assisi, 1998, pp. 55-65. On the Rule of Saint Francis, see A. Quaglia, *L'originalità della regola francescana*, Sassoferrato, 1943; see also J.-M. Genvo, 1961.

ff. 164-166, Testament of Saint Francis (1226), rubric, *Del testamento de messer sancto Francesco*; incipit, "El segnore dio per questo modo..."; explicit, "[...] e possibile la confermo ad voi questa sanctissima benedictione per infinita secula seculorum";

The Testament of Saint Francis was written during his last illness, in the fall of 1226, a few months before his death (published in *Fonti francescane. Editio minor...*, Assisi, 1998, pp. 66-71). The main study of the Testament remains that of K. Esser, *Das Testament des hl. Franziskus von Assisi...*, Münster, 1947.

f. 166v, blank.

ILLUSTRATION

f. 1, Historiated initial P with Saint Francis portrayed tonsured with a burnished gold halo, showing his stigmata.

The historiated and decorated initial with its vivid coloring and modeling reveals a likely origin in Northern Italy. The representation of the haloed Saint Francis in the opening initial, showing his stigmata supports comparisons with certain historiated initials painted by the Veneto-Ferrarese school of illumination (see Mariani Canova, 1969). Further comparative stylistic research would

certainly supply a better attribution and perhaps place of copy for this manuscript most likely painted in a Franciscan environment.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Research Instruments for the Study of Franciscans:

<http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm>

English Translation of the Fioretti and the Life of Brother Juniper:

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/mary/flowers.htm>

On the Fioretti:

[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_\(1913\)/Fioretti_di_San_Francesco_d'Assisi](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Fioretti_di_San_Francesco_d'Assisi)

English Translation of the Fioretti and the Life of Brother Juniper:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/ugolino/flowers.html>

The Sources for the Life of Saint Francis

www.ofm.org/mt/noelmuscat